

## CYNTHIA FAIR: THE PEOPLE OF THE LAKE

[19] in-law of some eighty-odd years. While they talked  
[20] the purest of pure Uru we could make a sound-re-  
cording.

[21] A badly bombed area of London is in good repair  
[22] compared with the Uru streets. Finally having  
climbed over crumbling walls and fallen into deep  
holes, we arrived at the house. Seated against the  
wall in the sun was perhaps the oldest human being

[23] I have ever seen. The mayor who spoke fluent Span-  
[24] ish said she was well over a hundred. Had she  
[25] been less deaf and more comprehensible, I am sure  
we should have discovered that she had waved to  
General Sucre during the wars of the Liberation.  
Seated on the low wall was the daughter, a young  
seventy. The mayor explained what we wanted. The  
centenarian mumbled, but Roca's efforts with the

[26] recorder were unsuccessful. We left her to provide  
local colour and material for photographs of the  
most amazing wrinkles. The son-in-law seemed com-  
pletely inert, so turning to the daughter the mayor  
asked her to talk. Realizing that a unique occasion  
was offered her probably after a lifetime of oppres-  
sion, she settled herself firmly on a solid piece of  
wall, and the floodgates of Uru eloquence opened.  
She launched forth into what was apparently her life-  
history, accompanied by the most extraordinary

[27] mime. Mother, who was past seeing, hearing and  
[28] still less, caring, continued to mutter, the husband,  
when the recital became particularly spirited, would  
stop chewing his coca, lift his head and open his  
mouth, but no sound issued forth. Apparently the  
mechanism had definitely run down, and he relapsed  
again into a state of ruminating coma. Encouraged  
by the general enthusiasm, our star became more  
and more expansive. By now most of the inhabitants  
had arrived on the scene, and judging by the expres-  
sion on the faces of the other ladies, she had by  
unanimous consent taken upon herself the role of  
local parliamentary candidate. She held the audience  
spellbound for one and a quarter hours, when either  
her vocal cords relaxed or she had come moments-